ATARI® PROGRAM exchange

BABEL
by
Joel Gluck

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USER INSTRUCTIONS
9/1/81

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

BABEL is a fast-moving, two-player game packed with sound effects and graphics. You and your opponent race to build Biblical towers of Babel to reach the stars overhead. You use your joystick to lay the bricks that let you climb to the stars and you score points upon touching a star. You win the game by outscoring your opponent, but you can also lose at any time if you box yourself in with bricks. In addition, building too precarious a structure can cause you to fall and lose points. And just when you think you finally have the game sewed up, you can become the victim of a celestial event or you can incur the wrath of the heavens!

Play BABEL for preset goals, set your own goal, or play an open-ended game. BABEL has three levels of difficulty.

REQUIRED ACCESSORIES

    Cassette version
        16K RAM
        ATARI 410 Program Recorder
    Diskette version
        24K RAM
        ATARI 810 Disk Drive
    ATARI BASIC Language Cartridge
    A pair of ATARI Joystick Controllers

CONTACTING THE AUTHOR

Users wishing to contact the author about BABEL may write to him at:

        1906 George Court
        Merrick, NY 11566

GETTING STARTED

LOADING THE GAME INTO RAM

1. Plug your two joystick controllers into the first and second (the two leftmost) controller jacks at the front of your computer console.

2. Insert the ATARI BASIC Language Cartridge in the (Left Cartridge) slot of your computer.

3. If you have the cassette version of the game:

    (Note. This program won't load in 16K of RAM if you have an ATARI 850 Interface Module turned on.)

    a. Turn on your computer and connect your program recorder to the computer and to a wall outlet.

    b. Insert the game cassette in the program recorder, press REWIND until the tape rewinds completely, and then press PLAY.

    c. Type CLOAD and press the RETURN key twice.

    d. After the game loads into RAM, you'll see the READY prompt. Type RUN and press the RETURN key.

If you have the diskette version of the game:

    a. Turn on your disk drive and insert the game diskette.

    b. Turn on your computer and your video screen.

    c. When the READY prompt displays, type RUN "D:BABEL" and press the RETURN key. If you're using more than one disk drive, remember to follow the device initial (D) with the number of the drive containing the game diskette (e.g., RUN "D2:BABEL" for disk drive two). The program will load into RAM and start.

THE FIRST DISPLAY SCREEN

First, you'll enjoy a brief, mood-setting extravaganza of graphics and sound. A purple text window displays below a black screen sprinkled with stars, with wind howling through the heavens. Shortly, a tower appears, accompanied by a majestic musical phrase. A bolt of lightning foreshadows the disaster that can result from a celestial event.

GAME OPTIONS AND VARIATIONS

Following this introduction are a display of a few important facts about game play and the options and variations from which you may choose. The display looks like this:

Important facts: (See documentation)

*Touch stars for points

*Use joysticks #1 & #2

*Press C for manual CELESTIAL EVENT

*Press ESC for manual ending

****

Type SELECT for skill level:

	ONE	TWO	THREE
Tower:	Yes	Yes	No
Penalty:	No	Yes	Yes
Goal:	200	150	75

Type OPTION for OPEN GAME or GOAL.

Type START to begin . . .

SELECT Key --> skill level

Press the SELECT key on the right of your keyboard to choose a skill level. Your current choice displays in reverse field on the screen; the default is level one. If you move past a choice you decide you want after all, press and release the SELECT key until the reverse field displays the level you want.

Skill level one is for beginners--you start with a prebuilt tower (Tower: Yes), and you don't lose points when you fall (Penalty: No). You play for 200 points. Level two is for intermediate players--you start with a prebuilt tower, but you lose points when you fall. You play for 150 points. Level three is BABEL at its most challenging--you start at ground level (Tower: No), and you also lose points when you fall. You play for only 75 points, so you must move quickly.

OPTION Key --> type of game

Press the OPTION key to select either playing an open game or playing for a goal.
The default is an open game, which is good for practice or for choosing your own
goal. You can end an open game at any time by pressing the ESC key. When you choose
an open game, you can still vary the skill level with the SELECT key; however, the
game won't end automatically when one player scores the number of points for that
skill level's goal.

If you choose playing for a goal, then BABEL ends automatically when one player
scores 200 (level one), 150 (level two), or 75 (level three) ability points.

Press START

After making your selections, press the START key to begin the game.

PLAYING THE GAME

THE PLAYING FIELD

The screen displays (1) an array of white stars against the black heavens, (2) initial scores of 10 points each at the top of the screen for players red and green, (3) red and green towers of Babel in the foreground (except in skill level three, in which players start from the ground), and (4) one red and one green flashing builder at ground level.

GAME RULES

You must build your way to the stars so that you can score points by touching them. At the same time, you must avoid falling, which can cost you some of your hard-earned points.

Moving your builder

1. The joystick in jack one controls the flashing red builder and the joystick in jack two controls the flashing green builder. Use the joystick to move your builder.

2. You automatically lay bricks when you move around, unless you:

   a. push the red trigger button on the joystick,

   b. move straight up or down, or

   c. allow your builder to rest (stand still).

3. You can't move through walls.

4. You can't move straight up unless you're adjacent to a wall.

5. You risk falling if you lay no bricks beneath you.

6. To touch a star, move your builder so that it attempts to enter the star's space. When you're successful, the star blinks and disappears and you score a varying number of points. Note that you don't actually occupy the star's space on this move, but you may move into it afterward.

Falling

1. You risk falling whenever you have no bricks beneath you.

2. Your chances of falling depend on:

   a. Your accumulated points--the more you have, the safer you are.

   b. The length of time you're suspended in midair--the longer you hang there, the greater your chances of falling.

3. You can control the direction of your fall with your joystick. Thus, you might be able to land on a ledge by moving your joystick to one side.

4. You can be injured in a fall. You'll know you're injured when you hear a brief, sickening thud and see a flash. Injuries cost you points.

5. Your chances of being injured and the penalty extracted in points both depend on the distance you fall.

6. In level one games, you don't injure yourself in falls.

7. WRATH OF THE HEAVENS

a. Should you incur the wrath of the heavens--you get no warning, of course--you'll notice a severe penalty   for falling once you've scored at least two-thirds of the points necessary to win the game.

b. In level one games, you're spared the wrath of the heavens.

Celestial Events

1. Celestial events occur randomly during the game.

2. They cause

a. More stars to display in the sky

b. Lightning to bolt across the screen, possibly striking you. When it does:

* Your score plummets to 5

* You're knocked to the ground where the bolt hits

3. If you're in midair when a Celestial Event occurs, you'll fall immediately afterward.

4. You can produce your own Celestial Events, provided you and your opponent agree to do so, by pressing the C key. Creating Celestial Events is especially useful if you run out of stars.

Resting and getting trapped

1. When you're not moving, you're resting, during which time you accumulate a small number of ability points. However, you can win a goal game only by receiving the decisive points from touching a star. Occasionally you can exceed a goal by resting, yet you won't be declared the winner until you touch another star.

2. You become trapped if you box yourself in with bricks. Should you trap yourself (better luck next time), you must resign and congratulate your opponent for winning this round. Press the ESC key to end the game and display the final scores. Since trapping your opponent is the other way to win at BABEL, consider this ploy when you're far behind in points.

Replenishing stars to continue playing

If you run out of stars before either of you wins the game, create a manual Celestial Event by pressing the C key. Of course, you'll get the bad with the good—lightning bolts and risks of falling, as well as more stars.

SUGGESTED STRATEGY AND HELPFUL HINTS

1. Your best bet is to build a tower in an upward diagonal zig-zag. This technique helps prevent injuries and falls, avoids becoming trapped, permits rapid initial ascent, and allows for quick reclimbs in a stair-like fashion.

2. If you know you're going to fall after a Celestial Event, position your joystick for the best direction, to result in the least distance fallen.

3. Once you accumulate enough points, you'll find you can venture through the heavens from star to star. But beware! With high scores, the Wrath of the Heavens awaits you!

4. Limit using manual Celestial Events to times when it's really necessary (and agreed to by your opponent). A sky saturated with stars makes the game pointless.

5. To avoid trapping yourself, use the red trigger button on your joystick to move about without laying bricks in areas of dense construction.

ENDING THE GAME

GOAL GAMES

Play ends automatically when, on touching a star, one player's score equals or exceeds the goal for that skill level. (Remember, reaching the goal by accumulating points through resting won't win you the game until you touch another star.)

Your final scores display automatically when one of you wins.

OPEN GAMES

Play ends when you and your opponent agree to stop. Press the ESC key to end the game and display your final scores.

PLAYING AGAIN

In response to the prompt:

        PLAY AGAIN (Y/N)?

type the letter Y to play another round. The overview and game option screen will redisplay. Type the letter N to end the program and return to the READY prompt in BASIC.

PROGRAM WARNINGS

When your opponent is touching a star or when a Celestial Event is occurring, don't try to move your builder, because you can't. Don't wrestle with your joystick. A light touch is more effective and is easier on both your hand and the joystick.

ADVANCED TECHNICAL INFORMATION

To display each player's score, Graphics Modes 5 (+16) and 2 were combined by changing the display list in lines 4012-4014 of the program.

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1. Name and APX number of program _____

2. If you have problems using the program, please describe them here.

_____

_____

_____

3. What do you especially like about this program?

_____

_____

_____

4. What do you think the program's weaknesses are?

_____

_____

_____

5. How can the catalog description be more accurate and/or comprehensive?

_____

_____

6. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being "poor" and 10 being "excellent", please rate the following aspects of this program?

_____ Easy to use
_____ User-oriented (e.g., menus, prompts, clear language)
_____ Enjoyable
_____ Self-instructuve
_____ Useful (non-game software)
_____ Imaginative graphics and sound

7. Describe any technical errors you found in the user instructions (please give page numbers).

_____

_____

_____

8. What did you especially like about the user instructions?

_____

_____

_____

9. What revisions or additions would improve these instructions?

_____

_____

_____

10. On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 representing "poor" and 10 representing "excellent", how would you rate the user instructions and why?

_____

_____

11. Other comments about the software or user instructions:

_____

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ATARI Program Exchange
P.O. Box 427
155 Moffett Park Drive, B-1
Sunnyvale, CA 94086

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